



POLICY WRITING FOR SAFETY & HEALTH

GUIDANCE

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INTRODUCTION

The Workers Compensation Management Bureau, within the Department of Administration, developed this guidance to assist State of Montana agencies in writing a health and safety policy specific to each agency. It explains why every organization should have a health and safety policy, what a policy is for, and provides suggested content to include in your organization’s policy. Other Montana governmental employers or private sector employers should consult with their own safety consultants prior to applying this guidance to their worksite locations to ensure conformity with applicable laws and standards.

WHAT IS A SAFETY & HEALTH POLICY?

A health and safety policy document an organization’s commitment to provide a safe working environment for its employees. The policy defines responsibilities for all levels of the organization and explains how it will protect employees from the risks within the work area. It is also an endorsed commitment by management to its employees regarding their safety.

WHY HAVE A SAFETY & HEALTH POLICY?

- To demonstrate management's commitment to their employee's safety.
- To document the organization's safety beliefs, principles, objectives, strategies and processes to build commitment through all levels of the organization.
- To outline employer and employee accountability and responsibility for workplace safety.
- To comply with the law.
- To identify safe work practices and procedures to be followed to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses.
- To inform employees what is expected of them.

SAFETY & HEALTH POLICIES ARE LAW FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES

Montana is under federal OSHA jurisdiction which covers most private sector workers within the state. State and local government workers are not covered by federal OSHA. However, the Montana legislature enacted the Montana Safety Culture Act (MCA 39-71-1505) which provides rulemaking authority and defines the requirements of a Health and Safety program for state and local governmental employers. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry adopts a safety code for every place of employment conducted by a public-sector employer. This safety code adopts by reference the following occupational safety and health standards from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act, (Code of Federal Regulations, as of July 1, 2014, Title 29, Parts 1910 and 1926).

The Montana Safety Culture Act requires management to implement an effective safety and health program and to communicate its commitment to the safety and health of its employees as an organizational goal. For employers with more than 5 employees, this commitment requires development of policies and procedures that assign specific safety responsibilities and safety performance accountability. Procedures should outline the steps to report, investigate and take corrective action of work-related incidents, injuries, fatalities and known unsafe work conditions. This requirement for safety policies and procedures mirror the requirement outlined in federal OSHA for private sector employers.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE POLICY?

Most organizations develop their policy in three sections:

- **The Statement of Intent** section documents your organization's commitment to managing safety effectively and identifies what you want to achieve.
- **The Responsibility** section assigns who is responsible for specific actions.
- **The Arrangements** section contains the detail of what you are going to do in practice to achieve the objectives identified in your Statement of Intent.

POLICY STATEMENT

The policy statement acknowledges an organization's commitment to managing safety effectively and defines its goals and objectives. The policy statement should be clear and concise, and should include the following:

- Leadership and management commitment to providing a healthy and safe working environment through integration of health and safety into all workplace activities.
- The commitment to comply with the law.
- The responsibility of management and employees to support and participate in the health and safety activities
- The accountability of management and employees.
- Commitment to continually improve the health and safety activities through the monitoring and reviewing of all health and safety activity.
- Intent to communicate the organizations commitment and method of communication.
- Commitment to ensure adequate funding and how the money will be made available

RESPONSIBILITIES.

The responsibilities section defines the responsibilities within the organizational structure. It does not detail individual responsibilities or specific safety issues.

It should cover the responsibility and accountability of

- Leadership
- Senior Management
- Management
- Supervisors
- Employees
- H&S Managers
- Facilities Managers

Responsibility should be extended throughout the organizational structure to ensure policy objectives will become integrated into all activities. For example, a policy could specify;

- legal responsibilities,
- accountability systems,
- promotion of health, safety and well-being awareness,
- education and training needs,
- reporting and correcting safety deficiencies, and
- injury and illness control information.

THE SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS

This section should explain how you will meet the commitments you have made in your Statement of Intent and should include information on how you are going to eliminate or reduce the risks of hazards in your workplace.

They may include:

- New Employee Orientation
- Occupational Hygiene
- Education & Training
- Audit
- Inspection
- Review Process
- Risk Assessment
- Safety Awareness
- Operating Procedure
- Supervision
- Maintenance
- Incident Investigation
- Fall Protection
- Personal Protective Equipment

This section should also provide the detail of how you are going to organize each aspect of safety to ensure the risk to employees is reduced or eliminated. For example.

Maintenance: (this is not an exhaustive maintenance arrangement)

- Ensure that all equipment is serviced/inspected/maintained in line with manufacturers/company requirements, and to comply with the Montana Safety Culture Act and the OSHA adopted codes.
- Ensure a maintenance plan is created which includes preventative maintenance, emergency shutdowns and planned shutdowns. All maintenance actions recorded and signed off by a senior person.
- Ensure that any new equipment introduced to site is suitable and fit for purpose and working in conjunction with suppliers/manufacturers and the site management team, ensure that a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment/hazard analysis is carried out.
- Ensure all employees are trained regularly on use of equipment including breakdown, emergency and planned shutdowns.

WHAT DO WE MEAN “HAZARD & RISK”?

- A **hazard** is something in your organization that has the potential to cause loss, harm or damage.

- A **risk** is the chance – however large or small – that a hazard could cause loss, harm or damage, taking into consideration the potential severity of the loss, harm or damage.

POLICY COMMUNICATION

The first section of the policy, Statement of Intent, should be signed by the leadership and management, and all employees should be made aware of the content.

All employees should be made aware of their responsibilities to safety and educated in how to perform safety related tasks and management.

The policy is a living document and should be reviewed and amended regularly. All employees should be made aware of any changes.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

[OSHA Recommended Practices for Safety & Health Programs](#)

[Montana Department of Labor & Industry](#)

[Montana Safety Culture Act](#)

[Montana Workers Compensation Bureau - for state agencies](#)